

- Hall Says Nicholson's Resignation Brings Opportunity to Improve VA's Responsiveness to Veterans -

Washington, DC – U.S. Representative John Hall (D-NY19), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, released the following statement today in response to the resignation of Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary James Nicholson.

"I want to thank Secretary Nicholson for his long service to his country, both in the Army during the Vietnam War and through his work at the VA. I wish him well as he moves on to future endeavors. Secretary Nicholson's departure opens the door for new leadership at the VA that should bring much needed accountability and make a renewed, meaningful commitment to improve veterans' services at this critical time for our nation's veterans.

Secretary Nicholson's tenure at the VA was marred by the loss of sensitive veterans' personal data, inadequate care for our newest generation of veterans, and a massive claims backlog that has kept veterans waiting for their disability benefits. President Bush should take this opportunity to improve veterans care by nominating a replacement who is devoted to reducing the 600,000 pending claims backlog, improving VA facilities, preparing the VA to meet the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and ensuring that any bonuses paid to senior VA employees actually reflect their performance for our veterans."

Through his work on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Hall has been pushing the VA to cut the backlog of veterans' claims, process new claims more quickly, and improve veterans' health care. He has also introduced legislation to block the performance bonuses of senior VA officials until the backlog is substantially reduced.